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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Permanent Representative of Kuwait reiterates appeal for basic health care which is being denied Kuwaiti civilian population by Iraqi authorities.

- Secretary-General welcomes draft convention of International Conference on Air Law which, he says, will improve substantially international law on terrorism.

- International Labour Organisation (ILO) appeals for funds to help countries affected by return of Gulf migrants.

- Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs says crisis in Persian Gulf is likely to have devastating social and humanitarian impact in years to come.

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The Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad A. Abulhasan, this afternoon briefed correspondents at Headquarters on the current situation in his country under Iraqi occupation.

Mr. Abulhasan said basic health care was still being denied the Kuwaiti population by Iraqi authorities. Kuwait had repeatedly appealed to various international agencies and humanitarian organizations to arrange for a shipment of emergency supplies to civilians in that country, but all efforts had failed thus far, due to Iraqi intransigence, he said. The Ambassador emphasized that Kuwait was not against humanitarian aid to Iraqi civilians; all his country was asking for was that the Kuwaiti population not be forgotten.

Mr. Abulhasan said United Nations humanitarian organizations should press Iraq to allow relief shipments to Kuwait by making any emergency aid to Iraqi civilians conditional on allowing equal assistance in Kuwait.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, on a one-day visit to Canada, today delivered an opening statement to the International Conference on Air Law which is being held at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal.

Emphasizing the significance of the Conference, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said it was not limited to the safety of aviation, but included also the global fight against terrorism and the need for enhanced co-operation. The draft convention on the marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection, which is before the Conference for approval, would represent a substantial development of international law on fighting international terrorism, he said.

The Secretary-General said legal instruments could not be viewed as a panacea for terrorism, but each one helped to build a more secure world. He hoped that all countries would become parties to the prospective new treaty on plastic explosives and that it would come into force without delay.

The Secretary-General was scheduled to meet Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney this afternoon, and will return to New York this evening.

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The Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Michel Hansenne, has issued a new appeal for international help to countries affected by the return of migrant workers fleeing invasion and war in the Persian Gulf.

Over $1 million were committed by Canada, Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) after the ILO chief launched a first appeal last November.

Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Yemen have requested immediate ILO assistance in coping with the resettlement and employment problems created by the sudden return of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers.

Mr. Hansenne said the funds available to ILO at this point were not sufficient to cover the growing number of requests.

Of the more than 2.8 million migrant workers and members of their families who were in Iraq and Kuwait before the Gulf crisis, 2 million are now estimated to have left the area. Over 450,000 Egyptians and 250,000 Jordanians have returned to their countries.

The authorities of both countries have told ILO not only of considerable difficulties in the resettlement of returning migrant workers, but of enormous financial losses suffered by their economy.

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In a separate development, Djibouti has informed the United Nations that it is facing losses of some $225 million by the end of March this year as a result of international sanctions imposed against Iraq and Iraqi occupied Kuwait.

The Permanent Representative of Djibouti, Roble Olhaye, in a letter to the Secretary-General, asked the Security Council to begin consultations on an urgent basis, in order to find a solution to his country's economic problems.

The Djibouti Ambassador said the economic losses resulted from decreased income in foreign trade, increased oil prices, higher importation and transport costs, and suspension of projects funded by Kuwait and Iraq.

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The Commission for Social Development is currently meeting in Vienna to debate the world social situation. Later it will consider preparations for the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

Addressing the Commission yesterday, Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs, Rafeeuddin Ahmed, said the crisis in the Persian Gulf was likely to have a devastating social and humanitarian impact. The Gulf crisis came as a rude awakening in the midst of the historic changes in Eastern and Central Europe.

The Under-Secretary-General stressed that there was an urgent need for international humanitarian and financial relief for the most seriously affected countries and peoples. For years to come, he said, the Commission would be occupied with responding to the social and humanitarian consequences of the war.

Citing recent studies, he said there had been substantial improvements in the global social situation, with the exception of certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America where standards of living and social conditions had deteriorated in the last 10 years.

As the general debate got under way, many speakers stressed that the gap between rich and poor countries was a source of international stability and tension. Speakers drew attention to such issues as legal protection for the rights of the disabled, the problems of a growing world population of elderly and the concern that the conflict in the Persian Gulf would adversely affect the social development of poor countries.

The Commission, which meets every other year, is scheduled to conclude its two-week session on Wednesday, 20 February.

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